

NYPL RESEARCH LIBRARIES



3 3433 08178532 5

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2008 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

<http://www.archive.org/details/emporianewyork00whit>

IWE
EMPORIA

WHITE

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS



Merry Christmas
to
Mr and Mrs Winters.



Emporia and New York

Emporia and New York

By WILLIAM ALLEN WHITE

33

EMPORIA, KANSAS
MCMVIII

90

3

NEW YORK
PUBLIC
LIBRARY

5000-1

*Copyright, 1906, by the Phillips Publishing Company
New York*

Press of The Emporia Gazette
Emporia, Kansas

5000-1
5000-1
5000-1

Emporia and New York

A MERICUS, with a population of five hundred souls, lies ten miles northwest of Emporia. It is a town that bit off more than it ever could chew; for it started to go around its public square and only got on one side of it. And to understand well the relations between New York and Emporia, it is necessary to know the relations between Emporia and Americus. For instance, if you get the confidence of an Americus man, you will learn that Americus people regard Emporia as an awful place, where the men stay out until all hours of the night, and many of the women are really no better than they should be. Americus people come to Emporia to have a good time, because they believe they are lost in the great city, where no one knows them from Adam, though we have a scant ten thousand people in Emporia; and when we see an Americus young man cutting up on Commercial street we know him as well as his mother knows him. And there are those who say that when an Emporia man, or a man from a town like Emporia, goes to New York, he is marked as surely as the Americus man in Emporia. And probably the opinion of Emporia people about the doings of New York men and

Geld 16 Nov. 1922

EMPORIA AND NEW YORK

the ways of New York women is just as inaccurate as is the Americus theory of Emporia.

Three years ago we sent Charley Vernon, the best reporter on the *Gazette* force, to New York for a holiday, and he came back with a poor opinion of the town. The first thing that shocked him was to see a funeral clattering down the street at a fast trot and, as we are rather accurate about such matters in Emporia, Charley instinctively counted the carriages and found that there were less than twenty, though he learned afterwards that it was the funeral of a man worth a million. We have had only one funeral in our town of a man worth a million, and the procession was three miles long. Charley says also that there were no buggies in that millionaire's funeral procession—the mourners all rode in closed carriages. This is odd to us, for in a funeral procession here in Emporia the hearse is escorted by the wagonette—a long, low, rakish-looking craft, with a seat on each side; the pall-bearers ride in the wagonette and have a moderately good time, and if it is a funeral of prominence the pall-bearers are generally leading lawyers or doctors or business men, and often important matters are thrashed out on the way to the cemetery and back. Following the hearse come the hacks—never less than three and sometimes as many as a dozen; for Emporia, not having

EMPORIA AND NEW YORK

a street car line, since the mule died ten years ago and put the old line out of business, has a score of fine hacks—rubber-tired ones with ivory fixings and silk tassels inside, and, for a quarter, these may be hired to go to any part of the town. After the hacks in the funeral procession come the double-seated surreys—the under-cut surreys taking precedence over the others—and after the surreys come the top buggies, and after them come the runabouts, and, if the funeral is an unusually long one, the spring wagons of the farmers bring up the rear. It means something to die in Emporia; it is not the everyday event in a man's life that it seems to be in New York.

Indeed, when a prominent man dies, or one whom we love, the mayor in our town issues a proclamation calling on the merchants to close their stores, and the banks close their doors, at the hour of his funeral. And when Mr. Soden, who had run the mill for fifty years, died last summer, though his funeral was on Saturday, when the streets of the town were crowded with farmers who had come in to trade, the stores and banks were closed at the very busiest part of the afternoon, and we slipped on our Sunday clothes and left Commercial street and sat for an hour on the lawn about his house, under the broad trees that he planted half a century ago. And while the preacher preached from the front steps of the porch

EMPORIA AND NEW YORK

of the house of mourning, and while the choir moaned inside the house, up town the stores were closed and business stopped. It would take a bigger man than a president of the United States to get that tribute from New York. Yet Mr. Soden never held an office in all his life, and would be counted a poor man in New York. They say in New York that the country makes us narrow and that we do not see things in their proper proportion. But unless one contends that the death of a friend is a mere incident of the day, like the loss of an old hat, we here in Emporia see some things more sanely and more humanly than they do in New York, where death in a house only interests the servants next door.

Also, here is another thing that we cannot understand in Emporia, and that is the attitude New Yorkers take toward weddings in what is known as society. Charley Vernon says that when he was in New York he saw a big crowd gawking in front of a church; policeman had to fight the women back to keep them off the side-lines; and he found that these women—well-dressed women, perfectly proper women, so far as he could see—and he has done "society" on the *Gazette* for three years, and ought to know—women, he says, who looked to him as though they might be coming home from the meeting of the Bridge Whist Club at Mrs. Cleaver's or Mrs. Lakin's—were jam-

EMPORIA AND NEW YORK

ming and pushing and shoving to get a sight of the bride and groom and the wedding party as they came out of the church. Would they do that in Emporia? Well, hardly. The Emporia way for those who are not invited to an important social affair—we call such gatherings “functions” in the *Gazette*—is either to stay at home and sniff at it, and call each other up over the telephone—which always leaks—and laugh at the proud one, or to give another party the same night. Never would Emporia women riot around a wedding to which they were not invited. They would die first.

But the fact that a number of Americus people, who drove down to hear the Emporia band concert in the park, reined up and watched Mrs. Steele’s lawn party eight years ago, leaves an uneasy suspicion bobbing over the surface of one’s consciousness. Perhaps these handsomely gowned women who riot at New York weddings are not New York women at all, but Emporia women, and women from towns like Emporia who chance to be in New York and wish to be able to say when they get home, “You know I just happened to be passing Trinity Church the day of the Vanderbilt wedding,” and then launch in and tell the Research Club what the bride wore, and all about the affair! If being away from home and lost in the whirl of the great city makes Americus women stare at Mrs. Steele’s

EMPORIA AND NEW YORK

party in Emporia, New York may have the same effect on Emporia women. For women probably are not entirely different from men, and there is this noticeable similarity in the attitude of the men in Americus to Emporia, and of Emporia men to the larger cities. When an Emporia man goes to Americus for a day he does not put on his good clothes. He has seen Americus men dressed up in Emporia, shopping and attending the county conventions, and he is astonished to find these men whom he has known dressed up for years stubbing around in their old clothes. But when the Emporia man goes to Kansas City, he puts on what he calls his trotting harness, and there he meets Kansas City men in their everyday clothes. Kansas City men dress up to go to Chicago, and Chicago men put on their fine raiment to go to New York, but on the streets of New York the men who naturally are wearing their everyday clothes seem so faultlessly dressed to us Westerners, who appear to have slept in our everyday clothes, that we gasp as we wonder how the New Yorkers must look when they go to London! And what the Londoners wear in Paris is so far beyond our sartorial dreams that we are not astonished to learn that when men get as far east as the Orient, in this crescendo of clothes, many of them give it up and go naked, or slouch around in their pajamas!

EMPORIA AND NEW YORK

But here the hateful suspicion bobs up again: Perhaps these well-dressed people in New York are not New Yorkers at all, but Emporians and their brethren from the country in their Sunday best, hurrying up town or down to go to lunch with some one! For New York surely is the eatingest place on this continent. In no other American town do people spend so much time fussing around their food as they spend in New York. Here in Emporia the stores open at seven o'clock, and by eight o'clock all the merchants and professional people are at work. For although the banks do not open until nine, the bankers are down and at work by half-past eight, and Major Hood, who for years ran our leading bank, used to come down town at half-past seven and stay in his office until six o'clock in the evening. There are no nine o'clock jobs in Emporia, and everyone, rich or poor, works nine hours, and many of us ten hours. Most of the clerks get an hour at noon, but the boss—as we call the head of a store or an office or a shop—rarely takes over half an hour. Most men go home for their noon meal, but a few hurry over to the lunch counter and spend fifteen or twenty cents, or at most a quarter, for roast beef and mashed potatoes, or stewed chicken and dumplings, or fried cat-fish and coffee and a piece of pie. The meal has no social significance, as it has in New York. An

EMPORIA AND NEW YORK

Emporia man would as soon think of inviting his friends to take a bath with him as to take lunch with him; for groceries have not got so far along in Emporia society as drygoods!

"Refreshments" at an afternoon party or an evening reception are not regarded as being so important as the decorations of the house. Mrs. Sylvan Nation spoke for us all when she said, "It doesn't make so much difference what you have to eat—just so the table looks pretty." But it must not be inferred from this that our women are not good cooks; we have passed the point in the gastronomic evolution of the town where the leading citizen goes into the shop and asks for twenty cents' worth of "meat." Our butchers have no trouble getting twenty cents a pound for their best porterhouse and sirloin; they are learning how to put up crown roasts and to save a lot of the interior arrangements of the calves that used to go to the scrap heap. And while, of course, groceries have not gone far in our society, there is the inner temple, where they have a fish course and a game course with their formal dinners, and wherein the women long since have given up trying to find out how Mrs. Warren makes either of her three kinds of plum pudding. They know that there is the kind with the cherries and the kind with the figs, but no one has ever come anywhere nearly describing

EMPORIA AND NEW YORK

the third culinary divinity, so it is simply and worshipfully known in our cut-glass circles as "the other kind."

But our cut-glass circle is not a wide circle, nor is its circumference wall impassable. At the annual dinners of the Christian Union, given at the Campbellite Church—which, of course, no one joins to get into society, as sometimes people are suspected of joining the Episcopal Church or the Congregational Church or the Presbyterian Church—about two hundred people from all the churches, and the Big Church, to which many of the men belong, sit down for an evening's social communion and good-fellowship. At this table are bankers and grocery clerks and lawyers and railroad men and farmers and mechanics, two-percent. money lenders and all classes and conditions of men. But the important consideration is that their wives and sisters and mothers are there also. It is no trouble to get men to fraternize. Indeed, it is hard to keep them from it. There isn't a man in Emporia who could refrain from talking politics and business with his footman if he had one. But, on the other hand, there are few women in town who wouldn't be grand ladies in ten minutes if they had maids. But no woman in town has a maid. The prospect of a bride coming to town with a maid once set the town to wondering what the standing of this prospective maid would

EMPORIA AND NEW YORK

be with the other girls in town who do general housework, and when it turned out that the bride really had no maid, and was a good cook herself, the town was greatly relieved. Therefore, one may know that for Mrs. Butcher to sit down beside Mrs. Banker, and Mrs. Baker and Mrs. Lawyer to be *vis-a-vis*, and for the haughty Merchant girls and the pretty Mrs. Barber to sit amicably at the same table, the town is essentially democratic, in spite of the social formaldehyde that the Whist Club uses in preserving its exclusiveness. Excepting the score of children whose parents send them to the Catholic school, through a sense of religious duty, every child in town goes to the public schools. And in the public schools money does not make for leadership. So the boys and girls of one generation, whose high school amalgamations often form the lines of social cleavage in the next, break up any disposition to a hereditary nobility in the town.

Thus, broadly speaking, one may say that in Emporia there is that equality of opportunity for the youth—equality of education, of financial backing, of social standing—which guarantees a democratic community. Not long ago there was a gathering of women from all over Kansas in Emporia, and the leading hotel was a-flutter with silk petticoats. Emporia clubwomen gathered up all the solid silver in town and borrowed

EMPORIA AND NEW YORK

both of the cut-glass punch-bowls and gave a reception that easily discounted any previous social celebration that we ever held. The hotel glowed with splendor that night. And one of the most prominent guests on that occasion had once been head waitress at the hotel. The town knew it, and respected her for it as much as it would respect a man whose proud boast was that he had once been a bell-boy and had risen in the world. Stronger proof of our real democratic spirit may not be found.

Yet this same degree of democratic enthusiasm is found in nearly every country town of the east and north and west. Emporia is rather typical than exceptional. Country-dwelling American men and most of the women are instinctively democratic. And being democratic, the cities sadden us country people. For the city—and New York is typical of urban American—fosters too much of the sham relation between men that one finds where class lines are set. The eternal presence of a serving class, whose manners may some day petrify into servility, the continual discovery that the man who brings the food, or sweeps the street, or drives the cab, considers wholesome conversation with him from his patrons as a sign of low breeding, the presence of the man who fawns for a quarter, all these make the countryman in New York desire to rush home and organize

EMPORIA AND NEW YORK

Sitting Bull Lodge of Ancient and Amiable Anarchists! It is not the extravagances of the rich, but the limber knees of too many of the poor, that disgust the countryman in New York. The saddest thing in that great city, to one who comes from the frank, wholesome, clean, happy faces of the country, is not the painted lady's face, with its glassy eyes, not the overfed, puffy-necked figures of the lazy, respectable hotel-dwelling women, who get no more exercise than stuffed geese, not the besotted faces of the men about the barrel houses—though a merciful God knows they are sad enough; but sadder than they are the loathsome, wooden faces of the men who stand decked out like human manikins in purples and greens and what-not of modish silliness and, for a price, surrender themselves to be made part of the landscape. For years Mickle the painter was the lowest form of humanity we had in Emporia. He was the town drunkard, and once they fined him for beating his wife; drink made him a loafer and a brute. But some way one felt that down in Mickle there was the soul of a man; some way one knew that he would not do certain things for money; some way one always understood that Mickle could still look into depths of personal degradation below him, and tell whoever tempted him there to go to hell! But on the other hand some way the flunky is just a flunky, and

EMPORIA AND NEW YORK

he seems to have given up the right to resent personal insult when he assumes the miserable part. And for a man to commercialize his American birthright seems a heart-breaking tragedy.

Probably the man in purple and the woman in scarlet are necessary parts of our social order, but they are not necessary parts of our social order in Emporia, and we country people cannot get used to them. Doubtless our ways are strange to the city people; certainly one of them nearly got his face scratched in Emporia a year ago when upon leaving a house he tried to pass five dollars to the girl who cleaned his room and helped with the housework! She regarded the innocent tip as an "overture." So perhaps it is in the point of view. There are, of course, drawbacks and compensations in every form of human existence, and it will be wiser to balance the difference between the town and country, rather than to contrast them. Therefore before we go onward as Christian soldiers from Emporia, marching as to war on New York, it might be well for us to consider whether New York may not have a just cause against us for some of our shortcomings.

Emporia and New York—differences which antedate those between ancient Rome and the Sabine farm, where Horace sipped his old Falernian—are merely differences of provincialism. Little old New York is pro-

EMPORIA AND NEW YORK

vincial; and even though New York is populated with people from Emporia and neighboring towns, these adopted New Yorkers forget, or pretend to forget, all about the old home town. And Emporia is provincial, in that, even though we go to New York once or twice a year, we ignore the fact that the very presence of three million people living there argues that they live in some degree of comfort and satisfaction. What New York can't see is how we can live in Emporia with so little going on at the opera house; and what we can't see is how a man who can have one hundred feet of lawn and a kitchen garden to sprinkle with the hose every evening after work, can permit himself to be locked up in a long row of five and six story cell-houses, with nothing to distinguish one cell-house from the other but the number on the front door. New York forgets that we have the family horse and buggy and can go jogging over town every summer evening at twilight, looking at our neighbors' porch-boxes and admiring their trees and flowers, and in the spring and autumn take long rides into the country, where the panorama is as good as Belasco ever attempted and the great comedy of life moves on without waits for the shifting scene. And we in Emporia forget that New York has the ocean and the great playgrounds for the grown-ups, to which they go when they escape from

EMPORIA AND NEW YORK

the cell-houses and are happy. And we both forget that the young man who insists on "talking show" can occupy the evening as foolishly in Emporia after his two days in Kansas City as the New York young man who spends his nights on Broadway. And the youth who talks books is—like the poor—with us in Emporia, just as persistently as he is in New York. Also, we both forget that young Mr. Windeigh, who regales the company with what I said to the boss and what he said and then what I told him and what Miss Stevens said and then what the head buyer said and what the boss said to me and what I told the head buyer and what Miss Stevens told me after they both had left, is as distinctively a product of Emporia as of New York. And the Emporia family of girls who chatter and giggle by the hour about what "he said" are first cousins to the "she said" boys, whom one hears on the street cars every time he goes to New York.

We are of one blood—city and country—in America; our differences are superficial; it is our likeness that is fundamental. We even have the same folk tales. In New York, for instance, they will tell you, with bated breath, that a man named Straus finances the big department stores and controls the policies of the newspapers, and that they do not dare to breathe without consulting him. In Emporia, they say the

EMPORIA AND NEW YORK

same thing of George Newman, our leading drygoods merchant. When the *Gazette* takes a stand in local matters people think that the stand is taken because George Newman and Major Hood have some scheme on hand. Though, of course, this is absurd, for often they are just as angry at things that appear in the *Gazette* as the oldest and most valued subscriber, who comes to the office with the previous day's paper folded tightly into a wad, and begins unfolding it and hunting for "that piece." Doubtless this man Straus often sees things in the New York papers that annoy him; but he can't help it. And when people come to him and ask him to stop it, he probably does what George Newman and Major Hood do—makes a note of the grievance and forgets all about it. Major Hood and Mr. Newman and Mr. Straus know that by day after to-morrow something else on the first page of the papers will be so much more terrible than day before yesterday's story that it will be forgotten, and the aggrieved ones will feel sure that they knew where to find the handle of the Archimedean lever that moves the world. For a great deal of the pomp and power in this world are delusions. And no one knows this more than Major Hood and Mr. Straus and George Newman.

But it would be interesting to inquire who gets the most out of life for the money invested—Mr. Straus, the pillar of finance

EMPORIA AND NEW YORK

in New York, or George Newman and Major Hood, pillars of finance in Emporia. We who know Emporia well and love her best are inclined to think that a dollar will buy about as much of the comforts that make for happiness here as it will any place in the world. To begin with, the Newman home and the Hood home in Emporia stand on great, wide lawns, and around them are beautiful gardens. Civilization has brought to Emporia every comfort that electricity and gas can afford a man in New York, and after a hard day at the store—a day just as hard as Mr. Straus has at his office—Mr. Newman gets into his automobile and goes to his farm, two miles from town, where he kicks around until dinner time. It is a great, broad, beautiful field, lying in a rich valley; on the farm are blooded cattle and hogs, and pottering with them is a lot of fun—and the fun is enhanced by the fact that they pay well. But an hour or two a day on that farm is making George Newman hale and hearty, and the sweep of the fields and the close, first-hand relations with men who have not learned the primary lessons in servility will make him a better, braver, kinder man than life in the store or shop can make any man. Every year the Newmans can go to New York and see all that Mr. Straus sees. They have the best of Emporia and New York. But has New York anything to offer to Mr. Straus every day in the year as compensation for not

EMPORIA AND NEW YORK

living in Emporia? New York can offer more money. Yet the house of Newman in Emporia will endure to the second or the third generation. It will be a respectable house. It will have peace and plenty, in so much as it really cares for peace and plenty. The house of Straus cannot ask more—and if it does ask it, probably that's all it will get. We shall all lie down beside George Newman out in Maplewood on the hill when our time comes, and others will come after us who will forget this generation and how it strived. Perhaps it is provincial, perhaps it is merely a countryman's view, but one is constrained to think that he who lives his life honorably and kindly among real neighbors will take more with him on his long journey, after leaving all his money here, than he who lives, perhaps just as honorably, in an environment full of men who must needs be strangers, and whose hearts he can never hope to know.

For there is something in touching elbows with men at work—men who are your equals and make you acknowledge it a thousand times a day—that gives a man a philosophy worth more than millions. And we are philosophers in Emporia—if nothing else. None of us is too busy, none of us is too poor, nor of too low an estate to have his opinion about things. There was Harvey Doyle, who went around from church to church year after year and got religion and joined them all, so as not to burden one

EMPORIA AND NEW YORK

church too long with the keep of his large and growing family; Harvey had a theory of life. When he finally settled down upon the Congregational Church as having, upon the whole, more good cooks in it than any other church in town, the women of the Aid Society claimed that Harvey's theory of life was that women loved babies—vicariously—and that if he could manage to keep one nursling in the house, the neighbors would never let the family go hungry. So he managed it. And when Mrs. Dunlap, on behalf of the women of the church, who suspected Mr. Doyle's theory of life, remonstrated with him about it, Harvey Doyle let out his graveyard cough, drew himself up nearly an inch as he almost proudly replied, "Madam—it seems to me that is a personal matter!"

And there was a modicum of justice in his claim. Still the church had its rights in the matter. And the story is told to indicate how closely the interests of me and thee are interwoven in a community like ours. It is a curious thing about human nature that when men live closely together, a score or two in a building on a twenty-five-foot lot, they are impelled to hold one another at arm's length; but when they live as we live here in Emporia, every family on its fifty-foot lot, with many families living on much larger lots, they feel the need of drawing one another together. And so no one ever starves to death in Emporia, even though we have no more food to give

EMPORIA AND NEW YORK

than New Yorkers; but we have what is more essential than food in the human partnership—we have a strong social sympathy.

And that social sympathy is the basis of whatever real difference there is between New York and Emporia, between the city and the country. Not that there is more in one town than in the other—for New Yorkers are most sympathetic when they see suffering. But we in Emporia see the suffering. Our neighbors' lives are a part of our lives. We are so close to one another that we almost anticipate the need of our friends. Therefore, in computing what the man at the bottom of the industrial ladder gets out of life, in our town, and in comparing it with wages in New York, the element of social sympathy existing in the country should be considered as a real factor in the calculation. If this social sympathy affects Mr. Straus of New York and Mr. Newman of Emporia, and it does, it surely must affect David Owen, a plasterer who lives up in the Bronx, around 166th street, and Frank McCain, the Emporia plasterer. Mr. Owen makes five dollars a day, and has all the work he can do. Frank McCain is glad if he can get a contract which nets him four dollars a day, and much of the winter he has little work. At the end of a day or a week or a year probably David Owens would have the best of it, in money earned or money saved. In the matter of food and clothing, for them-

EMPORIA AND NEW YORK

selves and their families, the two men would fare about the same. There would be a balance in their housing. For while Mr. McCain has his home among trees, where he can have a garden and Mrs. McCain can have flowers, which are denied to the Owens, they have a snug little apartment of four rooms, clean and fresh, well ventilated, and most respectable, and the housekeeping would seem to yield Mrs. Owen more results from the same amount of labor than it yields Mrs. McCain.

But there is this vital advantage that Emporia has for the McCains that New York cannot offer the Owens; Mr. and Mrs. McCain, in their house of seven rooms, need not move into a larger house if their family grows. Six or seven children may grow up comfortably in that house, and all go through the public schools on Frank McCain's wages. The children of hundreds of families in Emporia have grown up and have got high school and college educations, with the head of the house earning less than a thousand dollars a year. But the four-room apartment which houses the Owens is just enough for Mr. and Mrs. Owen and the baby; if another baby comes they will have to move from a twenty-five-dollar apartment to a thirty-dollar apartment, and if six or seven babies come, if the Owens live as comfortably as they and the McCains are living now, the Owens will have to rent a fifty-dollar apart-

EMPORIA AND NEW YORK

ment. And, more than that, the kitchen garden, which the McCains depend upon to furnish the family with potatoes all winter and garden truck all summer—the kitchen garden, which keeps the children busy out of school hours, is not to be had by the Owens to piece out the hole in the year's wages made by the increasing rent. Surely this is important. For a community that puts a tax upon children is not organized as it should be.

But eliminating the baby question and considering only the wages, the housing, and creature comforts, probably at the end of ten or twenty years the McCains will be further along in life than the Owens, assuming that each remains a plasterer and brings up a family in his environment. It is now more than twenty years since Frank McCain left Cincinnati to get along practically without a first-class plasterer, and in that time his family has grown up in Emporia and has been educated in the public schools. His son is a lawyer, graduated from the high school, and the law department of the state university, and the only thing that will keep him from being governor of his state is his politics. Frank McCain's opinion on things in his town is more valued than is the opinion of many a store-keeper or professional man. His lime-covered working clothes are not the insignia of any status in Emporia lower than that of the banker or the preacher.

EMPORIA AND NEW YORK

Indeed, he is not a plasterer at all, but a man among men. And recognized thus, one feels that Frank McCain counts for more in this nation than ever a New York plasterer who sticks to his trowel will count. For Frank McCain can bring considerable influence—personal and political and social—to bear on Major Hood, as every other man in our town can who keeps a bank account—and Major Hood has lent money to United States Senators for thirty years. Can David Owen, up in the Bronx, get so close to Mr. Harriman or Mr. Morgan, who have relations with Depew and Platt?

We are all fairly close to the throne in Kansas—and in the West generally. The high priests of politics do not impress us. Two United States Senators were in Emporia this fall, and both went wagging across the town to the depot, carrying their own valises. We refuse to get out the Second Regiment Band for anything less than a Cabinet officer. We are "gentlemen unafraid" and a few years ago, when a Vice President came through town, making speeches at the end of a railroad train, he pumped in vain for applause by mentioning two of the town's dignitaries. He couldn't fool us; we knew them both. The town gave one a beautiful funeral, and would be happy to do the same service for the other at any time reasonably soon. Moreover, if that Vice President, whose foible for the moment happens to be omniscience—as

EMPORIA AND NEW YORK

Sidney Smith remarked of an English statesman of his day—if the Vice President of that day in all his present power and glory would settle down in Emporia, and would try to name the delegation to the State Republican Convention, without seeing the fellows who do things in politics, and offering them something equally good, he would have a fight on his hands at the primaries that would make the disturbance over the rate bill in the Senate seem like a Quaker meeting. If he happened to be entirely right he would win; but if he was mostly right in his position and a little wrong, he would have to take his chances with the candidates' combination at the courthouse. For, although we live among elm trees, and wide, velvet lawns, in paved streets, and although we have three free public libraries in town, and although we have one four-story sky-scraper, the gentlemen who fifty years ago debated the slavery question through the brush of eastern Kansas, with Colt's Ready Reckoner as their parliamentary guide, are still able to bring in a considerable minority report. And while murder is regarded as such bad form that there has been no crime of violence in the town for over half a decade, a hotly contested primary in the Fourth Ward furnishes all the sportive excitement required by any full-blooded, able-bodied man, whose appetite for fun has not been surfeited by a plethora of

EMPORIA AND NEW YORK

actual homicide. For the first primary or two a President of the United States living in Emporia might have his way in a Fourth Ward primary, but at the third, if he got behind the wrong candidate for sheriff, the President would have to take his chances, and nothing would afford Way and Cagney and Clark and Peach and McCoy and the Haynes boys more joy than to bounce a President in a political blanket at some primary, when his heart was set on handling the delegation to the convention—if they suspected he was merely playing the game.

But probably this is only the spirit of '76; it is the American spirit, manifest at the Boston Tea Party, and by the San Francisco school board, that calmly viewed international war, rather than give up what it regarded as its rights. That spirit of independence—that intense individualism—is the bond that binds this American nation together; it runs through the townships, the counties, the states, and is dominant in the nation. It is in New York, just as it is in Emporia. And it is tempered in all men through all the nation by that kindness that comes to men who have known the world in the rough at first hand, the real gentility that is bred in those who by the sweat of their brows eat their bread, and know how hard a thing life is when one faces it alone. Hence our institutions for mutual help in the cities—our

EMPORIA AND NEW YORK

great benevolent societies, distributing God's mercy upon the poor; hence in the country, in Emporia, the social sympathy, the touch of nature always found among neighbors of every class and clique that "makes us wondrous kind."







APR 29 1955

